

REMARKS

Claims 3, 5, 6, 9-11, 13, 15, 17 and 18 are present in the instant application. At the Outset, Applicant gratefully acknowledged the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 3, 4, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 17, and the allowance of claims 6, 11 and 15. In the Office Action, Claims 7, 10, 16, 18 and 19 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,671,386 to Shimizu, et al. (hereinafter, "Shimizu"). Claims 1, 2, and 12 are rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as allegedly obvious over Shimizu taken alone. Claims 5 and 19 are objected to as being substantial duplicates of claims 4 and 18, respectively. Claim 7 is objected to for a minor informality.

By the above amendment, claims 1-2, 4, 7-8, 12, 14, 16 and 19 are cancelled without disclaimer or prejudice to their subsequent reintroduction in this or a continuing application, and without acquiescence in the propriety of any rejections pending against these claims. Claims 3, 9, 13 and 17 are amended into independent form, including features recited in underlying base claims. Claims 3, 9, 13 and 17 are submitted as allowable. Claims 10 and 18 are amended to depend from claims 9 and 17, respectively. Addressing the objection to claim 5, dependent claim 4 is cancelled, and claim 5 is submitted as allowable. Claim 11 is amended to correct a minor editorial oversight.

In light of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that all claims recite patentable subject matter, and kindly solicits an early indication of allowability. If the Examiner has any reservation in allowing the Application, and believes that a telephone interview would advance prosecution, they are kindly requested to telephone the undersigned at an earliest convenience.

Respectfully, Submitted,



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